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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2783
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0606
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0482
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1063
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: MEETING WITH INSTITUTE OF DEMOCRACY
AND HUMAN RIGHTS DIRECTOR AKHMEDOVA

REF: ASHGABAT 996

11. (U) Sensitive byt unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Institute for Democracy and Human Rights
Deirector Shirin Ahmedova told poloff September 21 that the
new Human Rights Commission has plans to cooperate closely
with the UN and EU. The Commission also wants to develop the
capcity and expertise to monitor legislation being considered
in parliament and prepare a national strategy to implement
human rights reform in Turkmenistan. Given the Institute's
eagerness to engage international partners, including the
United States, Post strongly believes a visit by DRL to
Turkmenistan would be very opportune. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) Poloff met today with the director of Turkmenistan's
Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, seeking to discuss
the role and ambitions of the new Human Rights Commission,
but also seeking more clarity on the Institute itself.
Institute Director Shirin Ahmedova was appointed to the
directorship in June, having worked previously in the Mary
regional governor's office and the Prosecutor General's
office in Ashgabat.

14. (U) She said that the new commission is comprised of
members from the Mejlis, Ministry of Education, Ministry of
Culture and Broadcasting, Ministry of Health, Ministry of
Welfare and Social Care, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and
Ministry of Economy and Finance. There are also members from
the Turkmen Women's Union, several professional unions, and
the Council on Religious Affairs.

15. (U) The commission's long-term plan is focused on a
strategy that will give it the capacity and access to
expertise needed to monitor legislation being considered in
parliament, prepare a national strategy for implementing
human rights reform, and coordinate implementation of those
reforms within the participating ministries, agencies, and
local government entities.

¶6. (U) The commission already has in place short-term plans to cooperate closely with UN and EU partners, including an October working group seminar to formulate a plan for initial steps this year. In November, a three-day seminar in coordination with independent experts from the UNDP will compile a near term program for implementing reform in the areas of culture, education, and social structures. Additionally, over the next two years, UNDP, UNCHR and others will be partnering with the commission to provide training seminars, both in the capital and in the provinces that will unveil planned reforms on a local level.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: It is clear that the commission has high ambitions, and that the director of the Democracy Institute believes that the commission will have a solid mandate the President supports. Members of our Public Diplomacy section report that Director Ahmedova recently made an unexpected, first-time appearance there, telling them the Institute will be opening a public information center soon, and requesting guidance on how that is done. More interesting signs of change. Post believes that given the Institute's eagerness to engage international partners, including the United States (REFTEL), a visit by DRL to Turkmenistan would be very opportune.
CURRAN